MAO ZEDONG'S REVOLUTIONARY AESTHETICS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PHILIPPINE STRUGGLE

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Delivered at a gathering of revolutionaries in a guerrilla zone in 1942, Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yenan Forum" constitute a landmark document in twentieth century revolutionary art theory and practice. While it represents a unique contribution of an Asian country as it is crystallizes the role of art and literature from concrete conditions of revolutionary experience and practice, it is at the same time of greatimportance in the worldwide arena of struggles for national liberation.

The Yenan Forum derives its particular resonance and urgency from its context, the ongoing process of struggle--the anti-Japanese war and the Chinese revolution. The Red Army led by Mao Zedong had gone through successful campaigns in the countryside where they mobilized the peasants against the invading Japanese, the warlords, and the reactionary Koumintang army. The assembly at Yenan, which they had cleared as a guerrilla base, represented a milestone in the journey of a thousand steps.

Mao Zedong himself situates the awakening of revolutionary consciousness in the May 4th movement of 1919 when the Chinese intellectual were caught up in the ferment of progressive ideas. By the time of the Yenan Forum, the revolutionary potential of these incipient ideas had become realized and numerous intellectuals, writers, specialists in the various arts, and cultural cadres of the Party had become won over to the revolutionary cause.

Against the dominance of traditional bourgeois aesthetics as it prevailed in China and the Western world, the Yenan Forum is an affirmation of revolutionary aesthetics being created in theory and practice from the experience of struggle. Art assumes a militant character as it becomes a weapon of social change.

General Premises

The Yenan Forum has a number of salient points within which revolutionary art is contextualized. First, an important part of the revolutionary task is "to ensure that literature and art fit well into the revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people, and for attacking and destroying the enemy." Such has been the role of art in critical historical conjunctures, as even Pablo Picasso in the context of the Spanish Civil War declared: "Paintings are not done to decorate apartments; they are instruments of attack and defense against the enemy." Indeed, some of the greatest art and literature of the world have borne out the role of art as witness to history and agent of change. Francisco Goya's engravings warned of the sleep of reason breeding monsters. Delacroix's "Liberty Guiding the People" was a clarion call in the French Revolution. Picasso's "Guernica" immortalized the resistance of the small Basque population in the Spanish Civil War in a modernist cubist style.

Bourgeois critics deplore as "instrumentalist" art which is placed at the service of the revolution or which assumes an active political/revolutionary role. Such an attitude harks back to Kant and his principle of "disinterestedness" which gave rise to the theory of "art for art's sake" or the absolute autonomy of art. On the contrary, Mao Zedong stressed that "there is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause." In the same way, there is no art that stands above ideology. Since art is interest-linked because of the social origins and institutions of its creators, it always bears ideological content. Thus, if revolutionary art has espoused the interests of the laboring classes, classical and traditional art on the whole have upheld conservative ideologies reflecting and preserving class privilege. The relation between politics and art becomes highly evident in historical conjunctures, but while politics exerts a strong influence on art, art in turn can have a significant effect on politics. Art is not only a weapon or instrument in the class struggle, but it has an important role in building the new people's culture in anticipation of or in the process of social reconstruction. Mao Zedong brought out the role of culture in his analysis

of contradiction in the context of base and superstructure: "True, the productive forces, practice, and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role.... But it also must be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role.... When the superstructure (politics, culture, etc.) obstructs the development of the economic base, political and cultural changes become principal and decisive.

The Yenan Forum brings out sharply the importance of assuming the class standpoint of the proletariat as the leading revolutionary class, with the peasant class as its closest ally. Art plays a part in combating the enemy and aiding the masses--the proletariat, peasantry, and urban petty bourgeoisie--both in the process of struggle and in political remolding. The basic question is thus: "For whom is art?" With this Mao Zedong enjoins all artists, writers, and cultural workers to immerse themselves in the masses, do work among them, understand and learn from them.

In order to be effective in his work, a revolutionary artist must study Marxism-Leninism as his philosophical framework and his own society as his specific context, including the various classes of society, their mutual relations and respective conditions.

Relevance to the Philippines and the Third World

The ideas of Mao Zedong have been particularly relevant to the Philippines and the Third World because of the parallelism in the social conditions of China during its revolutionary period and those of the Philippines which is still at present engaged in a protracted revolutionary struggle. It is necessary to summarize the history of resistance and revolution in the Philippines and the basic ills of Philippine society as a background for understanding its people's revolution and its particular revolutionary artistic practice.

The history of resistance

In the Philippines, the history of anti-colonial resistance began with the long series of revolts against Spanish rule

culminating in the Philippine Revolution of 1896 and the subsequent Philippine-American War at the turn of the century. Resistance against the invading Japanese forces in the Second World War was spearheaded by the Hukbalahap (Anti-Japanese Army) led by the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas under the control of the Lava group. After the war this became reduced to capitulationism and gangsterism. The first signs of political renewal came with the founding of the initial political group, the Student Cultural Association of the University of the Philippines by Jose Ma. Sison. This university organization was founded to combat the prevailing obscurantism, clericalism, and red-baiting in the academe and society as a whole. It was followed in 1964 by a more radical youth organization wider in scope, the Kabataang Makabayan or Patriotic Youth. From its fast growth ensued widespread politicization, marked by ferment in the universities among intellectuals and artists. The time was ripe for the reestablishment of the Communist Party of the Philippines on December 26, 1968 under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. The following year, on March 29, 1969, the people's guerrillas were brought into the New People's Army and in 1974 the National Democratic Front was founded. With these landmark organizations, the revolutionary movement for change was set on its course.

Since the late Sixties, the Filipino people, the revolutionary workers, students, intellectuals in cities and the large masses of peasants in the countryside have engaged in a struggle to overcome the ills of Philippine society, which were identified as imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism, and to establish a new pro-people order.

With the founding of the New People's Army in 1969, the revolutionary armed struggle commenced, spreading throughout the archipelago and escalating during the period covering the imposition of martial rule in 1972 by Marcos up to his downfall through the 1986 uprising , and continuing under the Aquino rule and the present Ramos government. Counterinsurgency operations, including bombings of the countryside and hamletting resulting in the displacement of people, were carried out by the reactionary army and human rights violations were rife during the martial law rule of Marcos. In 1986, the big landlord Mrs.

Aquino was brought into power by a so-called revolution, much propagandized by the U.S. press, which was in reality an uprising led by a general (now the incumbent), the reactionary defense secretary and their military supporters, with the help of the Catholic Cardinal, riding on the popular wave of anti-Marcos sentiment. Although top political prisoners were released at the beginning of her term, following U.S. tutelage she later declared total war against the peasantry and the revolutionary forces, along with her institutionalization of fanatic and criminal vigilante groups. During the present government of Fidel Ramos, intensive bombings of peasant populations continue in the countryside, especially in the North where guerrillas have built their strongholds.

The ills of Philippines society

Feudalism, imperialism, and bureaucrat capitalism have been identified as the basic ills of Philippine society. The concrete manifestations of these and the persistence and ingenuity of the people's struggle to overcome them have constituted much of the subject matter of revolutionary art.

In the Philippines, although the U.S. military bases in Clark and Subic have been dismantled, the anti-imperialist struggle continues in both the economic, political, and cultural fields. Only recently, the United States expressed its resolve to maintain its presence in Asia, and in particular in the Philippines under new conditions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank continue to foist onerous economic conditions on the people burdened by a huge foreign debt. In this past decade, U.S. imperialism has devised more sophisticated strategies, resorted to covert and dirty tricks, mostly in the form of psychological warfare, such as the Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) to disguise its machinations. In the Philippines, an extension of the LIC takes the form of the proliferation of religious sects which breed irrationalism, confusion, and psychological dependence.

Feudalism remains a reality in the Philippines, Mrs. Aquino's "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program" was a total failure, one which served to protect landlord rather than peasant interests. Big landlords, led by the

Cojuangco-Aquino clan itself, hastily made use of the loopholes and exceptions in the program and the peasants are no better off than before. As in the period of the Chinese Revolution, the proletariat in the Philippines is the leading the revolutionary force with the peasantry as its closest ally and the revolutionary land reform program is central to the national democratic revolution. Meanwhile, local industries are at a disadvantage because of the dominance of transnational corporations and because of prevailing poor conditions of production. Bureaucrat capitalism is a daily fact of life as politicians and government bureaucrats use their influence to advance their own personal interests to the detriments of the people.

Real change in Philippine society can be brought about only by revolution under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and the insights gained from the specific conditions of struggle by Filipino revolutionaries. In the Philippines the revolution is a protracted guerrilla war that takes into account the archipelagic nature of Philippine geography and the problems and advantages arising therefrom. The reactionary army of the government is backed by U.S. military aid, in terms of money, war materiel, and training, which form the basis of its relative strength in comparison to the guerrilla forces. On the other hand, the guerrillas have the advantage of terrain and, more importantly, the support of the rural populations. Learning from the Chinese experience, the Philippine revolution has adapted the strategy of encirclement, with the revolutionary forces surrounding the urban centers from the countryside. It is cognizant of the advantage of this strategy as a means of building a broad base of support since the guerrilla army is always complemented by a cultural contingent to win over the sympathy of the people and build hegemony in the local populations--the aim of the cultural revolution which is achieved only through a long process.

In the ideological struggle in the Philippines, anti-Marxist reactionaries reject Marxism on the grounds that it is a foreign ideology. But the very character of Marxism places emphasis on its adaptation to specific social and historical conditions; it is never absolutized or rigidified into a fixed dogma or formula. As Mao Zedong himself stressed, "Dogmatic Marxism" is not Marxism, it is

anti-Marxism. In other words, the revolutionary theory and practice of a particular country is continually involved in indigenizing Marxism as it deals with concrete needs and problems arising from specific conditions.

Cultural Programme

In 1968, the Re-establishment Congress of the Communist Party of the Philippines issued a Programme for the People's Democratic Revolution in the Philippines in the fields of economics, politics, military warfare, culture, and foreign policy. In the field of culture, it made the following calls:

"1. Develop a national, scientific and mass culture responsive to the needs and aspirations of the Filipino people;

2. Campaign again imperialist and feudal or Church control and influence over the educational system and mass media;

3. Propagate the national language as the principal medium of instruction and communication;

4. Develop a people's democratic culture and put revolutionary content in art and literature while combating the decadent literature of 'universal humanism', pessimism, escapism, class reconciliation and all other pernicious bourgeois trends;

5. Combat Christian chauvinism against the national minorities;

6. Support the progressive movements and actions among students, teachers, and all intellectuals.;

7. Guarantee the better livelihood of teachers and other staff members of educational institutions and guarantee economic freedom;

8. Respect the freedom of thought and religious belief and use patient persuasion in gathering support for the people's democratic revolution;

9. Denounce imperialist study and travel grants;

10. Fight for free education at all levels and wipe out illiteracy and superstition among the masses and rouse them to a revolutionary and scientific spirit."

Mao Zedong's Aesthetics and the Cultural Revolution

It is from the necessity to gain the broadest possible hegemonic support that the cultural-artistic component of the revolution assumes cogency. The salient points or guidelines leading to a revolutionary aesthetic theory and practice were articulated by Mao Zedong in the Yenan Forum talks in response to this need to build a new people's culture. As the contribution of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought to aesthetics, it is most balanced, sound, and humane formulation, at no time collapsing art into politics or categorically rejecting the cultural legacy of the past or the artistic contributions of other classes.

Art and life

According to Mao Zedong, the source of all literature and art is the life of the people. "Life as reflected in works of literature and art can and ought to be on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, nearer the ideal, and therefore more universal that actual everyday life." According to his formulation, while art reflects life, it does not consist of a simple mirror image, but is rather its intense crystallization. Furthermore, Mao Zedong's realism is firmly based on the immediate and actual revolutionary praxis of the artist who not only observes the people but also and especially interacts with them and learns from them even as he is engaged in mass cultural work.

In literature and the visual arts, the realist style is associated with the valorization of concrete and observed detail, resulting in the convincing evocation of the material reality of specific time and place. Engels advanced this further when he wrote: "Realism, to my mind, implies, beside truth of detail, the truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances." (Lukacs; 1980, 52) Georg Lukacs made an important contribution to the concept of the typical in realism when he wrote" "the creative writer does not create in perfect

freedom, simply out of his own mind, as bourgeois idealist aesthetics claims. He is on the contrary closely tied to the reproduction of reality in a manner faithful to its true content. This tie, however, means that he has to reproduce the overall process (or else a part of it, linked either explicitly or implicitly, to the overall process) by disclosing its actual and essential driving forces. The reality of a particular character, a particular destiny, etc., now depends on the expression of this overall process--the degree to which this is successfully achieved, its truth and penetration, concreteness, palpability, and typicalness." (Lukacs: 1980, 51-52)

In the visual arts, realism is associated with areas of European painting which place emphasis on material detail, as in the Dutch genre paintings of the seventeenth century. However, the concept of realism as an art historical term was consciously adapted by the nineteenth century School of Courbet in France where it acquired a socialist orientation in its choice of and sympathy for working class subjects. It was the realism of the Courbet School which developed into contemporary social realism, more political and keener in its sense of social contradiction, as practiced by artists in different countries.

To the revolutionary Chinese artists, realism was related to its European theoretical formulation in the emphasis on concrete material detail and observed everyday life, especially that of the masses of workers and peasants, as well as in the concept of the typical also found in Mao Zedong. In painting, however, this did not mean abandoning their traditional Figurative style and adapting Western realism with its modeling and tonal values--which Chinese artists learned via the influence of the academic socialist realism of Russia--, but for them it meant going beyond the conventional themes of genre and landscape in the Tao and Buddhist world views to deal with the new contemporary themes of people's struggles, communal work and socialist progress. In the art of landscape, it meant highlighting change, as when a factory or a children's school are found where a temple or pavilion used to be. It meant portraying in bright and striking images the new men and women of China at work in socialist transformation.

While Mao Zedong adhered to the "reflection theory" in art and literature, it is of note that he did not imply a passive reflection but an intense, typical and yet universal, representation of life and society. Following this, it may be possible to distinguish between "classical realism" and revolutionary realism. Classical realism, as various contemporary writers on aesthetics have argued, is bourgeois realism which purportedly gives a transparent reflection of life and social reality, but, through precisely this effect of transparency, lulls the reader and weakens one's acumen in perceiving the operation of ideology. In this effect of transparency and seeming objectivity, the reader overlooks the class-linked and ideological nature of the literary text which he takes to be a faithful representation of reality. In revolutionary realism which retains the basic feature of realism, the valorization of concrete material detail, class contradictions are not neutralized or glossed over but are, on the contrary, heightened or sharpened, thereby showing the totality of a society in its contending forces, and thus eliciting partisanship in the struggle. Revolutionary realism goes beyond the declarative mode, as in reflection, to the imperative, which is political advocacy, and the interrogative mode. The sharpening of class conflict creates an interrogative text as it questions the prevailing order and reveals its unjust and exploitative character.

Mao Zedong went a step further when he advocated that revolutionary realism be combined with revolutionary romanticism in what contemporary Chinese artists have called the "dual synthesis" style, which, however, has not yet been fully explicated or developed. Mao Dun, in his talk in the Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists in 1979, the first after the Cultural Revolution and the first post-Mao congress, took up this concept: "Through the 'dual synthesis' style, most authors have sought to mold exemplary heroic characters who advance bravely, revolutionary optimists who are unafraid of hardship and who are ever mindful of the long-range prospects of communism. However, such characters may also be found in revolutionary realist works. Therefore, works emphasizing the 'dual synthesis' style should definitely have another nonhypothetical domain above and beyond the molding of such heroic figures, and this can be sought only through a

'hundred flowers' liberalization." (Goldblatt: 1982, 43-4). At the same time, this he stresses that this cannot be taken as a formula for all, for, in the spirit of liberalization and democracy derived from Mao's cultural policy to "let a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend", artists should be free to develop their own styles--a popular theme in the 1979 Fourth Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists.

Cultural heritage and foreign influence

Mao Zedong's theory of revolutionary art does not advocate the repudiation of the literary and artistic heritage. There is no loss of appreciation or respect for the fine productions of the past: one must "critically assimilate whatever is beneficial, and use them as examples when we create works out of the literary and artistic raw materials in the life of the people of our own time and place.... We must on no account reject the legacies of the ancients and the foreigners or refuse to learn from them even though they are the works of the feudal or bourgeois classes." The revolutionary artist can learn from traditional art, but his task goes beyond its preservation to its transformation into a progressive contemporary context as new meaning is carried by old forms.

There are important implications in the use of traditional forms which were for centuries produced by the people and are thus an essential part of the national culture. It implies that revolutionary art will bear a national identity as it draws from and transforms tradition to reflect contemporary needs--that Chinese revolutionary art, in particular, will bear the imprint of the Chinese artistic identity. Following this, the revolutionary art of the people of other countries will also hear their own cultural identity, springing from their social and historical development.

The idea that the revolutionary artist can find valuable lessons from the works of the feudal or bourgeois classes shows a sound openness which eschews rigidity leading to class reductionism in art, as found in the attitude that feudal and bourgeois classes are reactionary or decadent and that therefore their art should be repudiated. As progressive/revolutionary aestheticians have pointed out,

the works of the feudal or bourgeois classes may contain a progressive potential. Likewise, the symptomatic reading of text which are conservative on the surface may reveal cracks in the surface that indicate deep ideological contradictions subverting their manifest world view.

Nonetheless, while the use of traditional forms is indeed a salutary practice, still it may give rise to certain problems. For one, there are forms in the people's oral and artistic traditions which have an inherent character because they function as vessels for new and changing content. On the other hand, there are forms and styles which, originating in earlier modes of production, may bear the conservative impress of these modes, or even more, reflect their ideology. In painting, for instance, the Western classical style of figuration which observes conventions of proportion for the human figure and stems from the idealist world view and conservative ideology of an unchanging order is thus incompatible with revolutionary art. It is against this style that realism, especially social realism which portrays living people in struggle, is counterposed.

In the same 1942 statement, Mao Zedong says that the artist can also learn from foreign art, which for the Chinese and other Asians would be generally European art. It is here that an opening to modernism which began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the first impressionist exhibit of 1874 can be found. This does not state that foreign influence be confined to the realism of the School of Courbet. In fact, it does not necessarily discount the influence of expressionism, cubism as in Guernica, or even surrealism. Picasso's _Guernica_ aside from being a powerful anti-fascist statement of protest against the bombing of the small Basque town, has demonstrated that revolutionary content and modernist form are not incompatible. The essential is that these works have a political content that is socially and historically specific, that they draw their material from particular social and political conditions. It is in this way that realism may be said to be constituted in a broad sense in works of art within a wide range of styles. Mao Zedong's campaign of "letting a hundred flowers bloom" basically showed his confident openness to cultural variety, at the

same time that these contending styles of schools would in the process reveal their strengths and weaknesses.

Popularization and raising of standards

One of the distinct contributions of Mao Zedong to the theory of revolutionary art is his discussion of popularization and raising of standards. Popularization involves the widespread dissemination of revolutionary ideas among the people. This is mainly done through the use of familiar and popular forms in literature and the visual arts. The use of popular forms, such as posters, illustrations and comic books, is effective because they are familiar to the people and there exists no psychological alienation to overcome, as that before an elitist and inaccessible medium such as oil on canvas. In progressive art, the elitism of the academic hierarchy of art media and of canonical prescriptions, is broken down. Popular forms, such as the wall poster and comics, are not in themselves "low" forms of art for they have their own standards of excellence and significant art can be created from them. What is important is that they be infused with meaningful political content, displacing the paltry material often associated with them. Instead of the ideal of the masterpiece, revolutionary art is responsive to issues and creates attitudes with respect to daily events. Therefore, its value lies in its flexibility, its sensitivity to issues, and its quickness to respond. Likewise, instead of the ideal of permanence, much of art done in the midst of struggle, because of the necessity for quick campaigns along with the risks involved, is transitory, like graffiti and instant street murals, but always fresh, renewable, and inexhaustible. However, this does not discount the fact that a large number of the art and literature done during the revolution have long-lasting value and high standards of excellence.

Possibly an important aspect of popularization involves a research into the people's symbols which provide entry points into their visual language and facilitate visual communication through images. The people's sentiments are channeled through these symbols which are centers or "nodal points of semiotic density" which have accumulated a rich complex of associations and connotations through a long period of time. So important are they that an ideology or

program of action which proposes radical change will not get popular response or support unless these are mediated through them.

Popularization and the raising of standards are complementary activities. Specialists and experts make studies and critiques of the works popularized in order to see how their standards can be raised. During the popularization of a political campaign, line, or call, such as the national democratic line which covers a considerable length of time, through art and literature there is a continual effort to raise aesthetic standards, but as Mao Zedong pointed out, raising of standards does not mean moving in the direction of bourgeois art but in the direction of a people's socialist art.

Dual criteria of art and politics

Central to Mao's aesthetic theory is the dual criteria in literary and art criticism. These are the political and the artistic. What is politically good advances the interests of the proletariat and the people as a whole who are encouraged to be of one heart and mind; what is politically bad undermines unity and resistance. As to the artistic criterion, "all works of a higher artistic quality are good or comparatively good, while those of a lower artistic quality are bad or comparatively bad." He explains this dual criteria by the fact that "politics cannot be equated with art, nor can a general world outlook be equated with a method of artistic creation and criticism. We deny that there is an abstract and absolutely unchangeable political criterion, but also that there is an abstract and absolutely unchangeable artistic criterion; each class in every class society has its own political and artistic criteria." This implies that Mao Zedong, as a poet and artist himself, gives dues importance to artistic form. For while art serves politics, the former obviously retains a relative autonomy, since it evolves its own criteria, and is not in any sense collapsed into the political or sociological. Furthermore, he refuses to absolutize and universalize political and artistic criteria. Instead, these are worked out in each society and in each historical period in a living Marxist practice.

The revolutionary artist strives for "the unity of politics and art, the unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form." No matter how advanced they are politically, works of art must have artistic quality in order to be powerful and appealing. He thus opposed works of art with a wrong political viewpoint and the "poster and slogan style" which may be politically correct in a particular occasion but deficient in artistic power.

The dictum of the "unity of form and content" necessarily leads to the difficult question of how this is to be attained. Form and content are linked together by the matter of effectivity in conveying political content. Effectivity is necessarily based on technical expertise or excellence, a mastery of the artistic vocabulary and of the medium, techniques, and tools of art, and of particular art forms. Furthermore, this mastery is not only a capacity that the artist has and develops in himself, but, more importantly, it is the capability to make the particular form of the work itself--through the judicious and insightful use of lines, colors, tones, composition, media, techniques, and the devices in constituting the pictorial signs or image, with a keen sensitivity to their semiotic or meaning-conveying potential--highly expressive of its ideational content, that is, the ability to create material form that embodies political meaning in its nuanced richness and resonance. Related to this is the study and investigation of the people's indigenous aesthetics, their artistic vocabulary and visual literacy in its specific characteristics, in order to work within the regular avenues of artistic communication.

Towards a study of literary and art criticism

Mao Zedong regarded literary and art criticism as one of the principal methods of struggle in the realm of literature and art and that it requires special study. In addition to the dual criteria of criticism, which is the political and the artistic, it is also possible to identify four levels in the criticism of art and literature. These are 1) to reveal the underlying relationship between the literary work and its society and historical period, 2) to bring out the ideology of the text, 3) to analyze the form of the work and show how it realizes meaning and ideology,

and 4) to determine and evaluate the partisanship of the work.

The first level of critical practice sets itself the task of revealing and demonstrating the relationship of the work, in both its content and form, to its society and historical period. This requires a thorough understanding of the society and period--the economic, political, and ideological relationships in which the work is situated--to be able to contextualize the text's references and allusions, ideas, cultural trends, values, attitudes, and its very form. No doubt, the relationship of literature and society is not a direct one-to-one correspondence, but one which involves complex and interrelated levels of mediation. The fundamental relationship to class interests within the relations of production is overdetermined by numerous factors: the artist's family background, psychological make-up and temperament; personal fund of experience, training and education, personal use of language, the important events and issues of the day, significant influences, fashions in art and literature, patterns of literary and artistic patronage, conditions of literary production, the dominant world view. Because of the operation of numerous overdeterminations, the author's class origin does not directly and automatically correspond to his class sympathies in a symmetrical manner. It is this level of criticism which lays bare the social and historical determinants of the work, thus breaking down the bourgeois myth of the absolute autonomy of literature and art.

The second level of critical practice brings out the text's ideology as it is linked to class interests in the society's relations of production, either by maintaining the status quo in firming up its legitimations, or by challenging it in promoting radical change. This project may not be as simple as it seems, for ideology is not something to be extracted bodily from the text. Rather than a simple line or motif which runs through the text like a colored strand, ideology in literature is complex, multileveled and finely nuanced. Moreover, it has to do not only with the content of literature but with its form as well. For ideology may be broadly defined as a system of political, legal, ethical, aesthetic, religious and philosophical ideas and values that ultimately serve the

interest of some class or group. It belongs to the superstructure and is determined in the last instance by the economic, i.e., the relations of production, at the same time that it acts reciprocally on the material base by hindering, retarding, or hastening social change. Ideology, such as the revolutionary proletarian ideology, holds the capacity to inspire and provide orientation for action. Thus, it is through ideology that a class can exercise hegemony in society.

Criticism necessarily involves the development of a finely-honed sensitivity to ideology and its expression in the text. Ideology permeates or saturates the text thoroughly and profoundly. It is encoded in its forms and conventions, embodied in the characters with their class origins, qualities, conflicts, self-images, and complex interrelationships; in the narrative, with its conflicts, complications, and resolutions; in the ideas, values, and attitudes revealed in the choices made, the actions, dialogues, and authorial interventions; in the presentation of the social and historical context, in the point of view or point of view of the work, in the form and structure of the literary work, in the very language or languages and idioms. And after an analysis of the text's ideology, one proceeds to ask how, in the last instance, it reflects or espouses the interests of a particular class, group, or faction within the society's relations of production. This leads to the assertion that art or truth in art cannot be above ideology. Truth, since it finds verification in facts and is formed in the continual dialectics of theory and practice, is not an absolute and idealist category above social and historical circumstance. And art, while it has its own specificity in the superstructure, is, in the last analysis, linked to class interests. For literature and art, no matter how highly mediated, cannot go beyond ideology into a transcendent and neutral realm where it is cut off from its moorings in the productive relations of society.

The third level of critical practice has to do with the analysis of the form of the work, its structure and internal devices, its formal conventions, and with the investigation of the processes by which its particular form produces ideological meaning. Traditionally, a categorical distinction was made between form and content, and with

form simply considered as a neutral vessel for content. Aesthetics, likewise, was also construed as having to do with the formal aspects and qualities of the work alone. But form, in art and literature, is not a mere neutral vessel of meaning, for it likewise takes root in social and historical circumstance. The different literary forms and genres make their appearance in particular historical periods and convey the concepts, values, priorities, indeed, ideologies of their time and place. The appearance or disappearance of certain forms may coincide with the shifts in art patronage due to economic change, while new patrons create new demands and fashions. Form itself is a bearer of ideology. A classical form such as the sonnet belongs to the classical world view and conveys its values or order and measure.

Furthermore, form is not mere style and technique that can be analyzed independently of meaning, but the very choice of form, formal structure, devices in language are part of the meaning of the work and belong to an ideological structure. Form itself is value-laden. As a conveyor of meaning, it grows out of a society with its contending forces and conveys the values and priorities that arise therefrom. Since form has to do with style, technique, linguistic and literary devices, as well as formal structure, it is also necessarily concerned with the development of technical expertise, following the demands of the particular literary form, whether poetry, the novel, the short story, as well as traditional or popular forms, written or oral, But again technique does not exist for its own sake alone or as an autonomous practice, but is inseparable from the production of meaning and ideology.

The fourth level of criticism involves the evaluation of the partisanship of the literary work. As in the Philippines, the immediate setting of struggle for literature and criticism gives a present urgency to the ideological-political criterion than at other times, for now, in the crucible of history, the writer can ill adapt or maintain a neutral stance, suspend judgment, or keep a safe political distance. Ideological meanings form a spectrum from the outright reactionary through degrees of bourgeois reformist liberalism and elite or native forms of nationalism to radical partisanship with the people

and the proletariat. Aware of possible contradictions between manifest and latent ideological content, the critic determines the work's ideological parameters and draws out, whenever possible, the progressive or radical potential of the work. In progressive-revolutionary texts, criticism does not involve the simple process of "extricating the political line" but rather charting out the ramifications and nuances of ideology as it is produced in the various elements of the text, as it is reproduced in other texts of the author, and as it is related to the economic and political system which they seek to change.

Moreover, the ideological meanings of literary texts are likewise viewed as relative to their historical and social contexts, so that while these meaning may be progressive for a particular period and mode of production, they may be modified or realized ideologically in the course of the historical process. Thus, a work which is progressive in the context of its time may clearly reveal its ideological limitations with respect to the productive relations of a later time or mode of production.

As ideology becomes translated into politics in the arena of praxis, the critic has to assess the political effects of the work. In the context of the present struggle, towards what political attitudes, espousals, and practices does the literary work lead the reader, whether directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly? The answer to this question lies in the difference between, on one hand, safeguarding the interests of the dominant class backed by foreign monopoly capital and, on the other hand, advancing the legitimate demands of the people towards realizing their full humanity in a free and just order and in which present historic struggle everyone plays his chosen part.

While Mao Zedong's aesthetic theory was undoubtedly sound, the later excesses of the Chinese Cultural Revolution showed a marked departure from his balanced, non-reductive view. The traditional heritage, as well as foreign works, was placed under severe attack. A general shrinking took place in the obsession of the Gang of Four with models in the various arts, so that, for instance, theatrical production became confined to twelve model plays and paintings were carefully scrutinized for what they deemed were reactionary meanings. The lingering influence of the

Gang of Four who controlled cultural life gave rise to much bitterness and dissatisfaction on the part of artists.

Revolutionary Art Practice in the Philippines

The Sixties in the Philippines saw the emergence of revolutionary aesthetics, art and culture with the founding of several militant youth organizations, a number answering to sectoral needs. In 1966, Jose Ma. Sison pointed to the need for a cultural revolution and in the same year called for the Second Propaganda Movement to continue the unfinished task of the Philippine Revolution of 1896. Compared to the nineteenth century Propaganda Movement, this second wave was to be "a propaganda movement of a new type, with a new class leadership and a new alignment of forces and with a new ideological and political orientation more advanced and more progressive ... because it occurs at a higher stage of historical development and because the enemy we face, with its domestic allies, is stronger and more advanced than the old colonialism it replaced." (Sison, 1967, 224-5). A pioneering work in reinterpreting history from the point of view of the people's interests was the basic activist text, _Philippine Society and Revolution_ by Amado Guerrero.

The first of the progressive organizations was the university-based Student Cultural Association of the Philippines which consisted of students and young intellectuals of the University of the Philippines. Later, the Kabataang Makabayan, a militant student and youth organization, formed a section for artists which later became the Nagkakaisang Progresibong Artista-Arkitekto.

The burgeoning political movement of the Sixties escalated to the First Quarter Storm of 1970 in which a series of mass actions posed a serious challenge to the reactionary state. After the First Quarter Storm, the radical mass organizations, which were enjoying large support, were busy in holding congresses and workshops, as well as conducting political campaigns and mass actions in response to various issues. However, in 1972 with the declaration of martial law and the mass arrest of activists, these organizations were forced to go underground and many of their members dispersed to the countryside where they joined the armed struggle.

One of the organizations which held its congress in 1971 was the Nagkakaisang Progresibong Artista-Arkitekto consisting of visual artists. The congratulatory message of Jose Ma. Sison, Chairman of the Kabataang Makabayan, delivered on the occasion of its First National Congress and workshop in 1971 clearly stated the bases of revolutionary art under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought: "What do we mean by national democratic cultural revolution of a new type in the field of art? It means overthrowing the art of the exploiting classes which is promoted by U.S. imperialism and its running dogs. It means building up a new kind of art that serves the people, especially the toiling masses of workers and peasants, in their revolutionary struggle. It means affirming the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat and its vanguard. It is the depiction of the masses of workers, peasants and Red fighters as the real heroes and makers of history. It is the casting away of the old selfish types of bourgeois and feudal heroes; it is the projection of the revolutionary types of workers, peasants and Red fighters. Among art workers, constant efforts are exerted to remould themselves so as to become better and more effective servants of the people and revolution." He takes up the matter of form in art: "The wall poster is as sharp and as powerful as the slogan that the wordsmith mints. But this is not the only art form available to you, although emphasis has been correctly put on it for obvious reasons. Our guiding revolutionary ideology impels us to seize so many other art forms available to the furtherance of the revolutionary struggle. You are expected today to discuss the multifarious forms of art and how to put them into the service of the people and revolution." (Sison: 1971, 53-4).

Another important event in laying down the groundwork for a revolutionary aesthetics in the Philippines was the holding of the First National Congress of Panulat para sa Kaunlaran ng Sambayanan (PAKSA) or Literature for National Progress, in December 1971 at the University of the Philippines. The PAKSA was a progressive and patriotic organization of writers, critics, teachers and students of literature. The women's liberation movement also emerged as an important part of the national democratic revolution with the founding of the Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan

(MAKIBAKA) or Nationalist Movement of the New Women which held its first congress in 1972.

While Mao Zedong's revolutionary theory was a major influence in these political organizations, it has necessarily undergone adjustment and transformation in its application to the Philippine context with its specific conditions.

Revolutionary peasant art and literature

In the Philippines, the guerrilla fronts of the New People's Army in the countryside constitute the principal ground for the flourishing of revolutionary art and literature in the Philippines. This is explained by the fact that it is in the countryside where the peasants and farm workers who comprise the main force of the revolution live and from whose ranks comes the bulk of recruits for the New People's Army. It is in the countryside that the main form of struggle, armed struggle, is being carried out and where the fledgling forms of the revolutionary organs of political power are being nurtured from the village level to the national level. Based on the strategy of protracted people's war, the countryside is the principal economic, political, and cultural arena of the Philippine revolution.

To quote a succinct summary by a people's writer, "The present characteristics of revolutionary art and literature are primarily determined by the conditions existing in the countryside. These latter include the level of development of people's war, which is still in the strategic defensive and which demands the concentration by the revolutionary forces, including the artists and writers among them, on their primary tasks in the armed struggle and the revolutionary peasant mass movement; the general poverty, exploitation and illiteracy of the peasant masses, and the destructive incursions of government military and paramilitary forces in the villages within the guerrilla fronts. Consequently, the high level of political, organizational, and ideological work and the rich oral traditions in local culture provide artistic and literary works their militant and mass character. Secondly, given the mobility of the revolutionary forces and the vulnerability of the guerrilla fronts to enemy

depredations, artistic and literary works are, in general, those that require less time, logistics and personnel to accomplish and which can easily be disseminated to large and far-flung audiences. The production of these works under the most difficult conditions of struggle, militarization, poverty and illiteracy proves the creativity of the revolutionary forces and the importance of revolutionary art and literature in the national democratic movement." (Montanez: 1988, 32).

Indigenous traditions

The culture of the Filipino masses is largely based on oral tradition. While it is true that a large number of the population are literate, the level of literacy has declined in recent years, accompanied by the tendency to revert to orality because of the paucity, if not the unaffordable cost, of reading materials. Such a condition results in further widening the educational and cultural gap between the urban and the rural populations. Given the widespread oral culture, cultural cadres must necessarily work from these folk oral traditions, which include epics, narrative songs, and poetic jousts, stimulate and transform them so that they can take on new progressive content.

Complementing these efforts is the literacy campaign primarily in the production of reading materials, mostly illustrated or in the familiar comics form, for peasants and workers. To be sure, literacy is of great importance and cannot be neglected because it is through literacy and diligent study that the masses will be able to assume governing powers themselves. Organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense should emerge as leaders from the ranks of organized workers and peasants, as well as from respected community elders. There has always been a warm response to literary materials because they fill a deep hunger for learning and information. From these efforts, the oppressed and marginalized may find their voice and assert themselves as self-determining subjects. New forms have come out of the struggle. For instance, testimonial literature which is a first-person account of experience in struggle, usually by veteran fighters, is an important vehicle with which to share personal and political insights valuable to the community.

Corresponding to this in the visual arts are the surviving indigenous traditions of ethnic and folk art, such as weaving, woodcarving, basketry, pottery, etc. In music, there are likewise rich indigenous musical instruments, structures, and forms which now bear new content based on contemporary experience. The people's living traditions shape the common identity and thus are not to be regarded as mere "residues" of earlier periods or modes of production to be eventually superseded in the course of historical development. The living traditions include ethnic art which refers to the productions of the cultural communities who show little or no Spanish colonial or Western influence because they isolated themselves or vigorously resisted colonial encroachment. Non-Christian, these include the animist Filipinos who preserve their epic traditions, and the large Muslim ethnic groups of the South. Folk art refers to the productions of the Christianized lowland peasant populations and which fuse indigenous and colonial elements. All these fall under Philippine indigenous arts, specific to the Philippines and excluded from Western artistic canons, especially of the academies.

In cultural work these marginalized groups which have suffered from government neglect, if not prejudice, require a different approach and a different aesthetics, since their people are wary about attempts to assimilate them into the mainstream culture as this would entail loss of identity. However, one of the strongest guerrilla zones is found among the highland groups of the North. It is also among them that is seen the most successful transformation of oral traditions in the revolutionary context.

Colonial legacy

The Philippines also has a long colonial history under Spain for almost four hundred years and under the United States for half a century. Spain introduced figurative painting on a two-dimensional surface, for while there was woodcarving with human figures, there were no paintings in precolonial times. Spain also left a legacy of religious culture in the form of churches, holy images, religious festivals, and with it the spirit of folk piety which remains pervasive in Philippine society. Again, this area has called for revolutionary transformation.

Religion as terrain of contention

In the Philippines with its strong religious component in culture, religion is a terrain of contention between conflicting discourses, the reactionary and the revolutionary. Despite the long dominance of the conservative institutional Church, the Philippines has a tradition of revolutionary clergy and nuns that goes back to the Spanish Colonial Period. This is continued to the present by priests and religious who organized the ecumenical Christians for National Liberation based on the tenets of the theology of struggle, the Filipino counterpart of the Latin American theology of liberation. Inspired by the progressive directions opened by Vatican II and the Medellin conference which instituted the Basic Christian Communities in Latin America and in the Philippines, the CNL, which is an organization of the National Democratic Front, seeks to recuperate the progressive aspects of Christianity, radicalize these into an "option for the poor" and articulate these into the revolutionary discourse. In the countryside where people suffer from military abuses stemming from counterinsurgency operations, the Basic Christian Communities provide shelter for the people, defend and support them in their struggle.

In a paper on "Theological Issues in the Philippine Context" presented in the Second EATWOT Assembly in Mexico City in December 1986, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologies (EATWOT)-Philippines, declared: "Struggle becomes in this situation a major thematic issue of theological consideration. Here, too, the question is not a matter of delineating _a priori_ the moral and theological parameters of struggle so that one is immediately pulled into the discussion of the morality of violence and non-violence. It is a matter of recognizing the violent and intolerable situation within which the poor suffer and of affirming the freedom and the space within which they could decide for themselves the modes of action that they can take that is commensurate to the demands of justice and liberation.... A theology of struggle, in this context, focuses attention on the process by which liberation is attained within every concrete situation of oppression and exploitation. Thus, the revolutionary process becomes an organized, active, and liberating process aimed at the

attainment of justice and the building of a new order of economic, social and political relations. Thus, too, the revolutionary struggle is essentially a "people's struggle" in which the poor and the oppressed are and should be the active agents and immediate beneficiaries."

In art, the traditional religious images undergo a semantic transformation. For instance, the Madonna and Child are contextualized in a setting of revolutionary struggle. The Pieta becomes translated into a human rights situation. The Magnificat theme is the raising up of the lowly to triumph over the kings of the earth.

To combat the spread of the theology of struggle, the reactionary camp, financed by U.S. extreme rightwing groups, has been sending wave upon wave of evangelists and sponsoring churches and fanatic sects and cults with the support of armed vigilantes or paramilitary groups. Mass hysteria in miracles and apparitions have also been provoked, with the incidental effect of boosting tourism.

Language

The national language, as an important part of the Filipino cultural identity should be developed and its literature promoted, at the same time that the vernacular languages and literature should be maintained and encouraged. The contributions to people's literature of 19th century progressive works written in Spanish and recent progressive/revolutionary works in English should likewise be recognized. In these texts, one may have to do, not necessarily with the extrinsic employment of a foreign language, but with its internalized appropriation into a progressive discourse. It does not also mean that all works written in the national language are, as such, of a progressive character, an idea that some scholars promote.

Language, to be sure, is a tool and medium of communication, and more than the simple use of the national language, what is important is that it be infused with liberative content. This is especially important because the use of the national language lends a populist character to the text, hence carrying a strong appeal to the masses. The well-funded reactionary manipulators of ideology know this only too well and their strategies involve the use of

the national language and folk traditions under the guise of nationalism in order to disseminate the most backward anti-people ideology to the masses. Even language has become a medium of contention between the liberative forces and those aggressively seeking to maintain a firm base for U.S. imperialist interest. Language itself is fast becoming politicized. All the more is their an urgent necessity to significantly enlarge the body of works in the national language with a progressive/revolutionary content so that the liberative meanings will be indelibly fused with the language.

Realism and modernism

In the Philippines, figurative painting of secular subjects began in the nineteenth century with studio portraits and landscapes by local artists, followed by large academic canvases by Filipino expatriates in Spain. In the first decades of the twentieth century these gave way to a proto-impressionist school of landscape and genre painting of countryside idylls conveying conservative values. Modernism was introduced in the late Thirties and took root after the Second World War. Thus, when the revolutionary movement gained ground in the late Sixties, several generations of artists were already trained in the modernist styles, such as cubism, expressionism, surrealism, etc. The first group of student artists, the United Progressive Artists and
Architects, did illustrative paintings of political work in the countryside and posters patterned after Chinese art during the Cultural Revolution and which showed Russian socialist realist influence. Their work, however, easily fell into stereotypes because of the limited illustrative style and the lack of concrete experience. Other artists took up progressive and revolutionary subjects but in the different modernist styles. The social realist trend which developed was not based on any particular style but on common progressive principles. The artists produced work in a variety of styles, including expressionism, surrealism, even conceptual art in different media or in mixed media. Among these figurative styles, realism was only one of them. But whatever style they were in, their subject and content reflected the socio-political conditions of Philippine society, although not done in the realist style of recording reality and being strictly faithful to

observed material detail. It seemed that the variety and inventiveness of the modernist style made flexibile by the artists could produce more striking images in their discovery of expressive form. Form itself assumed a semiotic meaning-conveying capacity and approached the desired fusion of form and content.

In the countryside, a lively grassroots theater took the form of skits and short plays in which peasant performers dramatized their experiences and drew lessons from them with the help of cultural cadres. In the urban center, Brechtian influence has been evident, as seen in the productions of the Philippine Educational Theater Association which has a wide repertoire of plays by Bertolt Brecht. The principal concept of his aesthetic theory is that art and literature, instead of reflecting or recording reality, defamiliarizes it and reverses our expectations by means of the "alienation effect". By "baring the process of the text" and eliciting audience participation, it aims to sharpen critical responses and discourage passive empathy. Although not realist, Brechtian theater is highly political with a strong educational and didactic intent.

Working within a varied cultural situation as prevails in the Philippines, the revolutionary artist is not only concerned with widening the public of his art but also with addressing different classes and sectors. The sophisticated urban audience exposed to world art demands a specialist art which makes use of the most progressive and technically refined aspects of various art traditions and contributions, both local and foreign. The raising of artistic standards can also lie in this area in which the reading literacy, as well as the visual literacy, of the large public is expanded and enriched in the progressive use of the vast resources of art in terms of materials and technologies. Experimentation in mediums and techniques is an important part of artistic activity but in the revolutionary context it is not pursued for the mere sake of novelty but in order to gain a new richness of expression.

The often-heard expression of "bringing art to the people" as has been expressed by some leading bourgeois artists is a distortion of the relationship between the artist and the people, as it also smacks of patronizing attitude. What is

necessary is not to bring bourgeois artistic productions to the people but to adapt the principle of "from the masses to the masses" from which stems much of the concreteness, variety, and liveliness of the new art and culture. The practice of this principle "entails intimate knowledge of the day-to-day life, struggles and aspirations of the masses, their language and their culture. Only in this manner can the writer achieve what is truly typical of the masses, that is, to discover where, based on their revolutionary program interests and practice as a class, they are going; and to avoid pitfalls in revolutionary writing, such as tailism or adventurism, sloganeering, stereotyping, imposition of petty bourgeois sentiments on the revolutionary masses, and elitist tendency to look down on the masses and belittle their achievements and potentials." (G. Guillermo: 1990, 44).

Features of the New Culture

Mao Zedong's formulations on culture have also been of influence on the Philippine cultural revolution, particularly his description of the people's new culture as national, scientific, and mass in an article in 1940 entitled "The Culture of New Democracy". This has been adapted as the orientation in art and culture and has served as guide for cultural work, at the same time that it has been locally defined in Philippine terms and according to Philippine needs. It is important to note that these values or qualities are viewed not as separate descriptive elements in an enumerative series but as necessary and integral components which constitute the progressive/revolutionary discourse.

National

"National" as a political value in art and culture asserts the people's
sovereignty and independence in the context of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle. It promotes the dignity and self-respect of the Filipino people who gain their national consciousness as a self-determining Subject in active struggle. It united the broad masses of the people--the workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie, all progressive sectors against the

power bloc of imperialism, mainly U.S. imperialism and its agents in the big landlord and comprador classes.

Likewise, the concept of national binds together the regional ethnicities and unites all progressive forces from all parts of the country with their cultural traditions and religious beliefs. At the same time, it addresses the problems of the indigenous peoples, victims of colonial and neocolonial prejudice, exploitation, and neglect, while respecting their culture and expressions. This involves preserving their identity and safeguarding the various ethnic interpellations in their specificity as these are articulated into the revolutionary discourse.

The formulation of the new culture necessitates the refocusing and sharpening of the concept of nationalism. It would be a function of metaphysical idealism to hypostasize it into an absolute and ahistorical entity consisting of ethnic, linguistic and cultural moments. On the contrary, it is necessary to historicize the concept of nationalism and to demonstrate its historicity by investigating the changing configurations that it has taken within different ideological discourses. Within what ideologies, for instance, did the nineteenth century articulate nationalism or for that matter, its concept of culture? In Philippine history, the definition of nationalism changes from the nineteenth century Propaganda Movement led by the reformist elites to the anti-colonial revolution of 1896, to the American Occupation, the post-World War II era during which was acutely posed the issue of national identity, to the politicized Sixties, the First Quarter Storm which was a high point of open mass protest, the martial law regime of former President Marcos, and finally the post-Marcos era of the Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos governments. The high moments in the definition of Filipino nationalism are found in the formulations of the 19th century Propagandists, most eminently, Dr. Jose Rizal; the 19th century revolutionary Katipunan led by the mass leader Andres Bonifacio; the anti-colonial statesman Apolinario Mabini in the early American Period; Claro M. Recto's anti-imperialist campaign in the postwar period; and in the Sixties, Jose Ma. Sison with his articulation of nationalism into the discourse of the national democratic movement with a socialist perspective.

The content of nationalism shifts according to the ideology and political discourse into which it is articulated, with class interest as the articulating principle. In the Philippines the ruling elites have always mobilized the concept of nationalism to its use because of its strong emotional appeal to the sense of country, and implicitly, to home and family and to "all one holds sacred." Nationalism has always served as a potent rallying point for unity. This is why the concept has often been fertile ground for ideological mystification. When it is equated solely with patriotism or love of country, its class content is glossed over to give way to its purely emotional connotations. The mystification is carried further when "country" becomes synonymous to "government". A form of ideological manipulation common to fascist regimes consists in foregrounding the common racial and cultural heritage and invoking these to make populist appeals for unification, thus obscuring exploitative and neocolonial relations and perpetuating, if not strengthening, their operation. The reactionary state sponsors or approves of a nationalism that is purely based on culture and tradition, but when this moves towards economic nationalism and independence, strong interventions are made to suppress it.

Indeed, nationalism as an ideological element with no definite class-belonging has been articulated into a wide variety of discourse, such as the discourse of the reformist ilustrado and that of the revolutionary Katipunan, both of the nineteenth century. In our time, it is found in authoritarian or fascist discourse and also at the same time in the revolutionary (or in the Philippines, the revolutionary national-democratic discourse--two antagonistic discourses. The difference lies in their respective articulating principles: in the first, where nationalism is combined with the feudal-colonial and bourgeois comprador ideology, with authoritarianism linked with a coercive military component, the principle is ruling class conservatism, perpetuating elite privilege and neo-colonial relations; in the second, where it is associated with anti-imperialism and the popular aspirations towards justice and equality, the principle is proletarian (mass)radicalism, advancing the people's revolution. In its historical dimension, nationalism in the national democratic discourse articulates the progressive and national-popular aspects of the culture of all periods,

past and present, into the new people's democratic culture, thereby delineating the historical continuity of the people's identity as anti-colonial and self-determining Subject, particularly as it brings to the fore the long tradition of the people's struggle against colonialism/imperialism and for independence and sovereignty expressed in the many forms that make up the Filipino cultural heritage.

National identity, a concept allied to nationalism, is also often subject to ideological distortion. For one, it does not consist in a static enumeration of qualities on the social, moral, and aesthetic planes which purportedly constitute the Filipino identity. Such a concept would only reify the Filipino character to an ahistorical and idealist essence. While the existence of common traits is recognized, national identity, however, is necessarily viewed in perspective as developing in a dynamic and dialectical relationship to the historical process. Its definition, therefore, cannot be pegged to a particular period, such as the indigenous precolonial period or the nineteenth century Propaganda and Revolution.

There is likewise, a continuing dialectical relationship between the national and the regional. This is seen, for instance, in the relationship of the national language, Filipino, with the regional languages. While the support and development of the Filipino language is a national campaign, the many vernacular languages should be preserved and encouraged to flourish as well, through programs for regional literatures.

It is only clear that the concept of national is not defined solely in terms of the urban cultural experience or in terms of the middle class alone, which is often the case, but in terms of the broad masses and their interests and aspirations. It is the national democratic articulation of the concept of national identify which alone can bring together the rich pluralities of the people's culture--the ethnic, linguistic, and religious--in a true unity. The key to the meaning of national identity lies in apoliticized and decolonized consciousness fully self-aware, critical, and engaged in the pursuit and praxis of national liberation.

Scientific

The scientific character of the new culture rejects the metaphysical and idealist world view with its mystifications regarding human nature, the economic and political structures, and the historical process that perpetuate exploitative relations. It opposes superstition which makes man live uncritically within a closed mold of unfounded beliefs, values, practices, and prejudices rendering them resistant to change. In a Third World country, however, superstition is not to be construed as synonymous to folk traditions which contain usable grassroots technologies suited to local conditions and resources and which also include valuable forms of cultural expression. What is to be discarded has to do with ways of thought and behavior which hinder the development of social and political consciousness, which constrict the productive forces and obstruct technological invention and scientific growth, and those which, because of their strong emotional charge, foster blind fanaticism.

Also to be opposed are all forms of obscurantism, dogmatism, and prejudice which block the perception of one's rights, interests, and tasks. Education, along with the drive for literacy, can do much to instill the scientific outlook. Teaching, guided by democratic rather than oppressive pedagogy, needs to develop the critical and investigative frame of mind. Contrary to metaphysical obscurantism, the scientific outlook holds that the material world exists and is knowable, and that truth is derived from the study and investigation of concrete reality. Things and phenomena do not exist in isolation and do not have an absolute and fixed nature or properties. On the
contrary, all phenomena, natural and social, are relative to one another in complex and ever-changing relationships. At the same time, the dynamic contradictions embedded in the heart of things as opposing properties, aspects, tendencies, characteristics, and movements, generate continual transformation and change. Applied to history, the dynamics of the historical process lies in the development of the basic contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production manifested in the struggle in the economic, political, and cultural spheres.

Within this framework, normative criticism involves recognizing and exposing ideological deceptions and opting for liberative, pro-people values. Practice involves social investigation and exposure to the life of the basic masses from whose experience of struggle is derived the principal content of the new culture.

Still in this context, art and culture are viewed as perspectival within social and historical coordinates. Rather than stressing the dichotomy and separation of form and content in art, one perceives their true dialectical relationship in which they dynamically interact and interpenetrate. While art has its specificity--its vocabulary and particular resources of medium and technique--the values that it conveys necessarily reestablish it in the ground of lived reality and hence it becomes related, directly or indirectly, through various mediations, overtly or covertly, to the class-linked ideological struggle. Aesthetics, likewise, is not absolute, eternal, nor given once and for all times, but is historically situated and originates from particular ideological discourses.

Mass

The mass character of the new culture signifies its espousal of the true interests and aspirations of the people, particularly the exploited and oppressed classes of Philippine society from the workers and the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie, all of which suffer from the domination of imperialism and foreign monopoly capital. It also derives from the fact that the new culture is created and enriched by the efforts and contribution of the broad alliance of progressive forces, led by the organized revolutionary masses.

Clearly, this culture is to be sharply dissociated from the artificial mass culture produced by the culture industry of the dominant classes for the consumption of the masses in order to keep them uncritical, ignorant, and unfree. This kind of culture exploits the masses as a large market of consumers at the same time that it greatly underestimates, if it does not stifle, their capacities, as well as breeds and perpetuates ignorance. it perpetuates values, such as

escapism and consumerism, which do not further the people's interests. In contradistinction, the new culture which is based on democratic premises combats the degraded popular culture and encourages alternative expressions and forms in line with the revolutionary campaign in culture. At the same time, the new culture opposes the elitist conception of culture which defines it as the preserve of the privileged few, that is, the wealthy and cosmopolitan elite, and whichproffers the tastes and values of the dominant class for emulation.

An important element of this culture is the production of progressive artists, intellectuals, specialists, and cultural workers from the petty bourgeoisie. Part of their output is addressed to the urban professional sector in politicizing, widening, and strengthening the base of the people's solidarity. At the same time, they join the mainstream of the people's struggle in which they create the new art and culture with the masses from whom they learn and with whom they share experiences and skills in a mutual relationship.

The practice of popularization and raising of standards

The development of the new culture involves the complementary activities and raising of standards. Popularization includes both content and form. Progressive content in the arts, whether in literature, the visual arts, music and theater, is more effectively disseminated through the use of popular, indigenous, and readily accessible forms, the use and propagation of which will stimulate creativity on a wider scale as well as counteract elitism. An important aspect of popularization is the development of an effective national network of communication and inter-regional exchange.

The use of oral indigenous forms is particularly striking in music in which the salidom-ay, balitaw and composo, as well as other folk song patterns have in recent times acquired new content reflecting experiences in an atmosphere of militarization and resistance. In theater, stage and street theater, including skits and short but effective dramatic forms, have been developed to suit the large needs but meager finances of the countryside. They crystallize in artistic form the life-and-death experiences

of the struggle, with the masses themselves creating their own theater with the initial help of specialists. In literature, poetry in both traditional and free verse, as well as stories, have constituted a significant part of recent production. People's literature has found venues in regional mass newspapers and other publications, a number realized by means of urban resources. In the visual arts, popularization has called for the development of popular and accessible forms, such as posters, comics, portable murals, calendars, postcards, comics, together with paintings which are reproduced through slide showings. For the visual artists, it has also meant the search for alternative venues for exhibition other than the traditional museums and commercial galleries which exclude a sizeable part of the population. It has also meant the exploration and development of technical reproduction processes in order to veer away from exclusive and elitist conditions towards a democratic, pro-people system.

To be sure, the task of popularization is not only in the field of literary and artistic expression, but also in other aspects of general culture, such as health programs, and literary programs that take into account the many vernacular languages, and the grassroots campaign in scientific education. Thus, there are field researches into folkways, such as herbal remedies and indigenous healing methods in order to systematize and enhance their use and application. In general, popularization means the widest dissemination of the national democratic outlook both in the theory and practice of struggle.

Along with popularization, the raising of standards became a felt need and moves were undertaken to make culture, specifically in its literary and artistic forms, meet the demand for the raising of standards, both in the countryside and in the urban centers. This second task involved the reassessment of cultural work and the enhancement of its productions. Stereotypes, outworn techniques, and sloganeering were discarded for a realism derived from actual experiences and investigations into the conditions obtaining in the fields and factories. Both elementary and complex forms were developed in response to different needs and situations. The artist, whether he be of the basic masses or of the petty bourgeoisie, strives to

intimately know and understand social reality both in his immediate environment and in the larger context of the struggle.

Mao Zedong and the Contemporary World

The political and aesthetic ideas of Mao Zedong have an influence and importance that extends from their original context in the Chinese Revolution to the people's struggles of the present time. Springing from the rich experiences of the Chinese people, they have a continued relevance to Asia and to the rest of the world.

Despite the reverses of socialism in Russia and Eastern Europe which the United States and its allies have dwelt upon gloatingly in the western press, Marxism remains a firm anchor and intellectual center, offering a genuine vision for revolutionary change at a time when class exploitation and imperialism take on new and increasingly sophisticated forms. Struggles for national liberation continue in the Third World, and the events in Russia and Eastern Europe, while deeply disturbing to countries in struggle, cannot lead to the abandonment of the revolutionary cause.

There are, however, lessons to be learned from recent experience, and while they are basically political they necessarily have a bearing on art, culture, and aesthetic theory. One basic need is the more refined adaptation and indigenization of the Marxist vision to each particular society with its unique and concrete conditions, history, and culture. As Mao Zedong himself said, "Dogmatic Marxism is not Marxism, it is anti-Marxism." Even in the Yenan Forum he warned of the dangers of rigidification and the reification of Marxism into absolute tenets, which in itself would be inimical to the very spirit of revolutionary dynamism and change inherent in Marxist thought. The Philippine experience has not been wanting in this respect, although there is always the need, in the light of changing political events and conditions, to continually reexamine the relationship of theory to practice. Viewed in a positive way, Marxism continually poses a challenge to the revolutionaries' adaptability and creativity in order to effectively address the needs of particular societies in revolution.

Class struggle

Recent political theory going under the term "post-Marxist" tries to undermine the basic Marxist principle of class struggle. But downplaying or doing away with this principle only results in masking or concealing the intense though covert conflicts of interest which continually occur beneath the surface. More particularly in the Third World, but also in advanced capitalist countries like the United States which is now experiencing the decay and criminality of the inner cities, class conflict remains a reality, although it can be strikingly overdetermined by the factors of ethnicity and race. Without the cogency of the notion of class struggle, the poor are further marginalized and their issues regarded as peripheral, thereby bolstering the power of the dominant classes. It is the consciousness of the class struggle which generates revolutionary change; without it, there can only be piecemeal reform within a closed structure.

The principle of contradiction, particularly as elaborated on by Mao Zedong, is an important analytical tool in historical conjunctures, such as revolutionary crises and situations. The classes in conflict, however, are not just solid homogeneous blocs but are divided into groups and fractions with their own interests, so that conflict can become exceedingly complex, including principal and numerous secondary contradictions occurring both on the level of the material (economic) base as on the superstructure, including its political and ideological instances.

Nationalism and democracy

In recent times, the ideological concept nationalism, often at the heart of cultural/artistic production, has become a highly charged concept and a rallying point for states aspiring to independence and sovereignty. If nationalism is based on the affirmation of a common history and cultural heritage, as well as racial homogeneity, this results in the intensification of ethnic rivalry to the point of armed conflict in the desire to gain dominance. Indeed, the concept of nationalism involves unity, the affirmation of a common or shared identity, often vis-a-vis a threatening

externalinterventionist force. As a concept, it is both inclusive and exclusive. It is possible, however, that, instead of a narrow, exclusive concept, there can be formed a multi-ethnic nationalism based on the interests of all oppressed classes. When nationalism is articulated into the revolutionary Marxist discourse, ethnic conflicts are alleviated with the adaptation of the proletarian class standpoint which cuts across ethnic groups, at the same time that the working class seeks hegemony in society as a whole not just by advancing its own corporate interests but also by espousing the other classes' progressive interests with which it can find common cause.

Like nationalism, democracy as an ideological element should also be articulated into the revolutionary discourse. In itself, the core of the concept is egalitarianism and "equal opportunity for all"; it also foregrounds populist values in programs for the people. Yet such egalitarianism and populism remain unfocused and diffuse, indeed vulnerable to elite strategies, when they are not directed by the proletarian standpoint. Likewise, an ideological strategy of U.S. imperialism is to have a monopoly on the definition of democracy to suit its hegemonic interests. It seeks to disarticulate democracy as an ideological concept from the revolutionary discourse with a socialist perspective and to fix it firmly in a liberal-conservative discourse governed by the principle of monopoly capital. It plans to immediately coopt under its global zone of influence countries which have recently thrown off authoritarian rule by convening them under the rubric of "newly-restored democracies". But it is only when democracy is articulated into the revolutionary Marxist discourse guided by the proletarian standpoint that it can become truly realized in society.

U.S. imperialist strategies in culture and ideology

It is also in the past decades that U.S. imperialist strategies to undermine the course of socialism have intensified and assumed the numerous and complex forms of a Medusa's head. Their forms range from overt aggression and interventionism as in the United States' bombing of Iraq to covert psychological warfare in populations engaged in revolutionary struggle and in socialist states. Their operations are so insidious that the "target populations"

are often kept unaware of their machinations. The more successful their strategies are the more invisible their operations so that the eventual crisis or collapse will be ascribed only to internal forces, without taking into account the long period of penetration and quiet sabotage by inimical imperialist agents into the social fabric.

Among these ideological strategies which have been effected in the Third World, particularly the Philippines and Latin American countries, is the Low Intensity Conflict formulated by the Pentagon and the CIA. Salient to the definition of LIC is its character as a war on all fronts, parallel to the "total war" which former Philippine President Corazon Aquino, following U.S. tutelage, declared on the revolutionary forces, especially the politicized peasantry in the countryside. It emphasizes psychological warfare and integrates the economic, socio-cultural, and political with the military counterinsurgency operations. LIC is to wage war on the economic, psychological, social, and cultural fronts; it has a strong ideological slant, that is, an anti-communist orientation. On the economic front, civic operations of LIC include giving assistance and incentives to blockading food supplies to guerrilla zones. On the political front, US pressure is brought to bear on the target country through the traditional channels of diplomacy,
including regular visitations to observe and proffer advice, and even more, through covert CIA manipulations. On the cultural front, it makes use of cultural expressions and folk traditions which they manipulate towards a reactionary orientation. LIC involves, as part of its psychological operations, the propagation and intensification of public interest in occult religions, pseudo-oriental philosophies, and superstition as nonrational ideologies to subvert and obstruct the advances in people's culture with a scientific outlook.

A strategy during the past Corazon Aquino government and one which was also adapted for Latin American countries was the Doctrine of the Third Force. Here the U.S. government is favorable to a government which takes a "centrist" position between the forces of the Left, the progressive-revolutionary forces, and the Right, the conservative-reactionary camp. It is a position that suits

LIC well because of its humanitarian guise while promoting US interests. This doctrine can be unmasked as a rightwing strategy as it ultimately aims to marginalize the Left. Related to this is the strategy of "pluralism" which ostensibly gives equal value to contending social forces, be these classes, political parties, ethnic groups. However, this again serves as a benign mask for traditionally privileged groups to take the opportunity to coopt new and less advantaged groups and to exploit their weaknesses. At the bottom, the Doctrine of the Third Force and the bourgeois concept of "pluralism" serve to diffuse the perception of contradiction in society which is central to revolutionary thought.

Updating the cultural revolution

While many of the issues of the cultural revolution remain valid to the
present, there are new contents that have emerged, new issues that must be addressed and which will be dealt with as themes in revolutionary art and literature. In the eyes of the Third World in struggle, the West is drifting into a postmodernist meaninglessness, an obsession with pure surface and image, an eclecticism without historical sense, the decentering of the human subject and a general loss of moorings, with an art and literature that conveys this loss of meaning. There are, however, issues that have acquired a renewed urgency and immediacy in the present day. The most important of these are ethnicity, ecology, and women's liberation.

The issue of ethnicity has come to the fore in many countries today. Ethnic rivalries are rending societies apart in bloody "ethnic cleansing". Because they often have a long history, the solution is not easy. Ethnic communities resist assimilation, especially forced assimilation, into the dominant groups, with a corresponding loss of identity. On the contrary, ethnic interpellations should be preserved and aligned with national interpellations, so that in the Philippines, for instance, one can be both an Ifugao or a Maranao (members of a different ethnic groups) and a Filipino. During the Spanish and American colonial periods, there prevailed prejudicial attitudes on the part of the dominant Christian population towards the many non-Christian groups which

resisted Western encroachment. The awakening of political anti-colonial consciousness gave rise to a progressive attitude towards the indigenous peoples with efforts to espouse their interests. In the context of national democratic movement, the indigenous peoples are assured of the preservation of their identity and even of their right to self-determination. Balance is maintained between the national mainstream and the indigenous communities whose distinct contribution to the national culture are recognized and valued.

Ecology and the preservation of the natural environment is an urgent contemporary concern. For this issue to be genuinely addressed beyond lip service and media coverage, it needs to be politicized to show the role of imperialism in the ravaging of Third World environments, as in the dumping of nuclear wastes, the exporting of banned drugs, chemicals, fertilizers, and insecticides. The protection of the environment is an important issue in the ongoing cultural revolution which seeks to create a keen awareness on the part of the population for ecological concerns.

While the women's liberation movement is not a new issue, there is a pressing need to hasten its progress all over the world. The women's liberation movement has made considerable gains since the Sixties when the first women's organizations were founded. Its success depends on its rootedness in the actual conditions of the society. In the Philippines, a genuine women's movement necessarily links up with the national democratic revolution led by the proletariat and the peasantry as its closest ally. The women's mass movement in the cities necessarily interacts dynamically with their mass movement in the countryside which is the arena of the armed struggle and in which women have made significant contributions. The favorable conditions for the liberation of women from patriarchy and feudal values can only be achieved with the realization of the radical agenda for a just and egalitarian order. This awakening feminist consciousness is now increasingly reflected in art and literature, not only in its personal and individual aspects but also and more especially in its social and political dimension.

Despite the setbacks in Russia and Western Europe, Marxism, particularly the contributions of Mao Zedong, continue to

proffer the vision of a new human order of justice and equality, and with its attainment, lasting peace and freedom for all people. Marxism poses a challenge to creativity, which is the ability to adapt principles sensitively and flexibly to unique social and historical conditions, the ability to correctly conceptualize and realize a genuine leadership of the people working towards the goal of eradicating class exploitation and oligarchic privilege, and the ability to consistently pursue its liberating vision through all vicissitudes of history.

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